

Message Text

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CONFIDENTIAL HAVANA 2160

NODIS CHEROKEE FOR THE SECRETARY

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS CU
SUBJ: AMCIT POLITICAL PRISONER EXCHANGE

REF: A. STATE 168478; B. HAVANA 1952

1. FIDEL CASTRO'S REFERENCE, IN HIS JULY 26 SPEECH, TO CATEGORIES OF PEOPLE IN US JAILS WHOM PRESIDENT CARTER SHOULD RELEASE (SEE HAVANA 2157) MAY POSSIBLY, THOUGH NOT NECESSARILY, BE INTENDED AS REPLY TO OUR INDICATION OF WILLINGNESS (REFTELS) TO DISCUSS EXCHANGE OF AMCIT POLITICAL PRISONERS IN CUBA FOR US PRISONERS OTHER THAN FOUR PUERTO RICANS (LEBRON, FLORES, CANCEL, AND COLLAZO).

2. REFERRING ONLY TO LEBRON "AND OTHER PUERTO RICAN PRISONERS HELD FOR MORE THAN TWENTY-FIVE YEARS", CASTRO MAY HAVE DELIBERATELY CHOSEN LESS SPECIFIC FORMULATION (THAN HIS EARLIER INSISTENCE ON "PUERTO RICA FOUR") TO OPEN UP OPTIONS AND TO DROP ATTEMPTED PRESIDENTIAL ASSASSIN COLLAZO. AT SAME TIME, CASTRO MAY BE AMPLIFYING MENU OF POSSIBLE EXCHANGE PROSPECTS BY POINTING TO WILMINGTON TEN AND "THOUSANDS OF US BLACKS IN JAIL BECAUSE OF POVERTY AND DISCRIMINATION."

3. WHAT CASTRO MAY BE AIMING FOR, IN WAKE OF NEGATIVE US REPLY TO HIS "PUERTO RICAN FOUR" OFFER, IS UNILATERAL RELEASE

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BY USG OF PRISONERS INCLUDING LOLITA LEBRON, POSSIBLY SOME OF HER PUERTO RICAN COLLEAGUES, AND/OR SOME POLITICALLY RADICAL, BLACK US PRISONERS. CASTRO'S STATEMENT THAT IT WOULD BE "EXCELLENT" FOR PRESIDENT CARTER TO RELEASE THESE PEOPLE MAY BE HINT THAT CUBANS WOULD RESPOND POSITIVELY TO SUCH A US GESTURE, OUTSIDE CONTEXT OF A FORMAL EXCHANGE. THESE HYPOTHESES REMAIN SPECULATIVE, HOWEVER, SINCE CUBANS HAVE NOT FORMALLY

REPLIED TO OUR DEMARCHE ON THIS MATTER (REF B), NOR IS IT CERTAIN
THAT THEY WILL DO SO.

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